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OUR POLICY IN THE NEAR EAST

By Frank C. Hanighen

When Iran became a major issue before the U.N.O. it emphasized, even more than the knotty problem of Palestine, the question: What is American policy in the vital area, between the Mediterranean and India, known as the Near East?

Our policies in the Far East and South America have sprung from the Open Door and Monroe Doctrines. But our official attitude toward the Near East rests on no such explicitly formulated foundation. As a result, in the popular mind, our Near East policy seems a confusion of such disparate factors as petroleum and Zionism, with some suspicion that State Department diplomats prefer to follow the "British line".

Examination of our current diplomacy in one sore spot of the Near East — Syria and Lebanon — does not support these popular impressions. The State Department has consistently stood for evacuation of British and French troops from, and unqualified self-government in, those two countries; former Turkish provinces which were in 1920 placed under French Mandate responsible to the League of Nations. Now both Syria and Lebanon are nominally independent; charter members of U.N.O. So we have opposed maintenance of "spheres of influence" in this area, whether by France or Britain.

There is no oil in Syria and Lebanon, and American oil companies have no important interests there. Nor has the troubled condition of neighboring Palestine any bearing on the matter. Finally, American diplomacy took issue with British as well as French policy and impartially disapproved of understandings between the two Powers which might be of imperialistic nature. This picture therefore suggests that principle rather than political expediency has shaped our purpose in this region.

Our policy in Syria and Lebanon is, in miniature, our official policy in the whole Near East. This, to put it briefly, is to promote peaceful cooperation among the various States in this important area and among Great Powers with interests there; to preserve the integrity of the smaller nations; to bring about the full independence of those still

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under foreign control; to bring to an end the conception of spheres of influence; and generally to foster international harmony.

II

Now all this, in these days of stark power politics, sounds highly visionary. The Department of State, however, insists that its policy in the Near East is based on very realistic motives. Here is the official explanation:

The Near East may well have replaced the Balkans as the most likely breeding ground for world war. Nowhere else do the interests of the various Great Powers collide more seriously, nor amid a stronger rising tide of nationalism. If all these factors can be harmonized, the area will become progressive and peaceful and one of the great potential causes of war will be removed.

Even if a world war -- from participation in which we can not remain aloof -- should start elsewhere, we should have a diplomatic foundation in the highly strategic Near East in order to reinforce our military operations.

These, rather than Zionism and oil, are the real interests of the United States in the Near East. Protection of oil company interests is assertedly not an important motive. American oil companies, it is claimed, have lately exerted no pressure on the State Department.

As for the thorny Palestine problem, the Department <u>apologia</u> is less clear. We are officially in favor of a "Jewish National Home", but that does not necessarily mean a Jewish State in Palestine, where both Jews and Arabs should be consulted about any changes in the status quo. This appears vague and equivocal. It is pointed out, however, that the Palestine problem is treated as being a domestic rather than an international issue and that the Department of State cannot undertake to formulate domestic policy. At least, the intent in Palestine (subject to White House intervention) seems to accord with the general Near East policy -- to promote peace and harmony in that area.

III

The State Department policy toward the Arabs received its fullest official expression in a speech by the Hon. William Phillips, Special Assistant to the Secretary of State, on

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June 2, 1945, to the Institute of Arab-American Affairs. Mr. Phillips, also our former Ambassador to Rome, besides giving official blessing to Arab cooperation, said:

> "We value highly the friendship and cooperation of the people of the Near East. We are convinced that a greater knowledge of each other and of each other's problems will not only benefit them and ourselves but will also be in the interest of world security and prosperity."

Prosperity is linked, in the official reasoning, with the necessity of a general rise in the standard of living in this area. The Department of State looks with favor upon tendencies of the Arab Governments to broaden their political bases. It feels that the Arab States would be in a more wholesome condition if the masses could share in a higher standard of living. Associated with these ends are our encouragement of investment, and development of industry and communications -- not, perhaps, without a selfish desire to develop our trade with this part of the world.

American diplomats, noting the cooperation of the representatives of Arab States with the United States at the San Francisco Conference, look ahead to further happy collaboration in the voting in the United Nations Organization. And, since the Arab movement is largely identified with the Mohammedan world, it is realized that the nature of our dealings with the Arabs in the Near East may affect our relations with the strong Moslem element in India and in other parts of Asia. Effective cooperation between the United States and the world of Islam hinges on American policies in the Near East.

In that part of the Near East which borders Russia, American diplomacy has also tried to further its basic principles. Our diplomats have sought to eliminate friction between the Governments of Russia and Turkey. As for Iran, the United States joined with Russia and Britain in a special declaration at Tehran in 1943, which said that the three Governments "are at one with the Government of Iran in their desire for the maintenance of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iran".

Strong representations have been made by the United States, in accordance with this declaration, against Soviet tactics in the Azerbaijan province of Northern Iran.

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IV

These are the outlines of American policy in the Near East. But the future may alter the intensity of the pressure on this policy.

If there is no pressure on the State Department from the American oil companies at present, it may be partly because the oil companies find nothing incompatible with their interests in the State Department's policy. Also, their Near East development is still relatively small. But the commercial attitude may become more exigent as the size of its investments increases. Then, the Department of State may find oil imperialism attempting to change its policy.

The problem of Palestine may also change. Today, the miserable plight of displaced Jews in Europe calls for early decisions. But, if conditions in Europe improve, the pressure to bring large numbers of immigrants into Palestine may diminish. Conversely, if conditions on the Continent grow worse, the problem may become acute.

Perhaps the greatest threat to the policy outlined above lies in what some call "the new isolationism" -- the "spheres of influence" trend. This trend obviously influenced Secretary of State Byrnes at Moscow and receives prominent expression in the columns of Mr. Walter Lippmann.

Certainly if we adopt the "spheres of influence" policy, in this hemisphere or elsewhere, we cannot logically oppose French, Russian and British imperialism in the Near East. Self-determination will have to give way to selfish deals between various nations and vested interests. Oil companies and other great business enterprises again, as 20 years ago, will make their own political arrangements and then call the tune for foreign policy. Nationalist leaders will increasingly place their hopes on armed revolt.

The quasi-Wilsonian policy of the State Department in the Near East is now facing a decisive challenge. The issue is whether its altruistic principles in this area will stand or fall before the reviving trend of "spheres of influence".

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Not Merely Gossip *A Supplement to* Human Events Vol. III - No. 5

By Frank C. Hanighen January 30, 1946

When the angry tempest of strikes is stilled, the good barque of our economy should sail through a stretch of great prosperity, with accumulated domestic needs insuring good business and employment for some years. Foreseeing, however, a letdown when these needs are satisfied, the State Department has designed a far-reaching plan to take up the inevitable slack.

This as yet unpublicized document, running to over 100 pages, has excited -- literally -- the foreign experts who have been privileged to study it. They note two persistent motifs running through it: (1) The United States should endeavor to promote the free flow of trade and to break down tariff and currency barriers; and (2) the United States should by every means short of resort to arms, try to bring about the political independence of colonial areas and struggling nationalisms. (The plan, for example, expresses a wish that Egypt should attain full independence of the British Empire.)

The revolutionary implications of the second motif arouse politically-minded students of the plan. Does the State Department realize that this threatens the liquidation of the British, French, Dutch and Portuguese empires? Diplomats who piously guided us into war to save the British Empire now plan the downfall of that system in order to keep the paychecks rolling in Detroit. For clearly the two provisions cited above mean that we hope to pick up more orders, if possible all the orders, when countries like Egypt and Indo-China are wholly independent. This promises no little reaction from London, Paris, Amsterdam and Lisbon; and some lively diplomatic forays may be expected.

One interesting corollary: While the plan theoretically applies to the Russian Empire, Moscow's rather primitive and stubborn resolution to hang on to her property, together with our appeasement neurosis, gives the expanding Russian Empire exemption. Indeed the upshot may be that we shall clear away the obstacles of the "democratic" empires so that the new Stalinist imperialism can move in.

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"Now It Can Be Told." One aspect, largely neglected by the press, of the belated disclosures this week about the secret deal between Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill at Yalta, is the fact that the President gave away to the Russian dictator Chinese territory and sovereignty -- Port Arthur and "free port" rights to Dairen, behind China's back. This confirms early reports, voiced in this publication, that the United States brought pressure on China to make the Sino-Russian Treaty of August, 1945. It is also noted that Mr. Roosevelt forgot the "Open Door" policy in this Yalta deal which gave to Soviet Russia concessions in China, which Czarist Russia originally had extorted from the old Manchu dynasty before being forced to surrender them to Japan. Additionally the deal gave away the Kuriles, Japanese territory. Another point, hardly to be overlooked by those who wish a just peace, is that the two men who accepted this secret deal at Yalta -- Roosevelt and Churchill -- were pledged by the Atlantic Charter, which they authored, to oppose "territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the people concerned".

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Whether or not effective, the UNO intervention in the Iranian controversy symbolizes one change of great significance. The wartime procedure of secret "Big Three" meetings is coming to an end. Henceforth it will be far more difficult for the Foreign Ministers of Russia, Britain and the United States to make private deals affecting other countries.

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In future some little country, like Lebanon or Costa Rica, is likely at any time to raise for public discussion matters which the Great Powers would prefer to settle à la Roosevelt, on the cuff. The Governments which would find this open diplomacy most unpalatable are Russia and the United States, as it means restraint on their power to "pressure" weak nations like Turkey or Argentina.

A by-product of this situation is the successful Russian insistence on the selection of Trygve Lie, Norwegian Foreign Minister, as Secretary-General of UNO. Since it was inevitable that this post should be filled by the representative of a small nation, it was vital to Moscow that he be "friendly". The U. S. will provide the administrative seat of UNO, and in exchange accepts the Russian choice of administrator.

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Some Democratic politicos are trying to force the resignation of Secretary of War Patterson -- now in hot water as a result of the demobilization troubles -- and are proposing as a successor a former Assistant Secretary of War, Mr. Louis A. Johnson. If they should succeed, it would be a defeat for the New Dealers and a victory for the Conservative wing of the party.

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Last week we commented on the political disappearance of Messrs. Litvinoff and Maisky, long associated with the collective security policy, as an indication of an increasingly nationalistic trend in Russia. Some observers also give significance to the fact that both men are Jews. Anti-Semitism has been by no means absent from Soviet Russia. The epithet "Trotskyist" has been often described as a shame-faced synonym for anti-Semitism. Experts on Russia recall that before the great purges and trials of 1936-37, the heads of 23 out of 28 sections in the Soviet Foreign Office were Jews; and that after the purges only five Jews remained in those positions. With nationalism, anti-Semitism is reportedly on the increase in Russia.

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The interesting exertions of Justice Robert H. Jackson in Nuremberg, attended at their outset by wicked and perhaps unfounded rumors that he might run for the Governorship of New York, seem destined to inspire further political speculation. Jackson now says he intends to return to his duties on the Supreme Court in the final weeks of the present Court session; that is, in May or early June. There's a good reason for such an end to his forensic vacation. For he will then sit in judgment on a case of great political importance.

The CIO Federal Employees Union is seeking to invalidate that part of the Hatch Act which prohibits Federal employees from engaging in political activity. The Court so far is reported split on a four to four basis. Jackson's vote can decide the case; indeed the Court has so decreed it, by ordering a re-hearing before a full Court of the nine justices. This makes Jackson's return essential.

If the Court should rule in favor of the CIO union's appeal, the result might have some bearing on the election next fall. For there are about 3 million Federal employees in the country -- a reservoir of recruits for the PAC.

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Mexico City radio contributes the following interesting item on Latin America: "The Secretary of the (Brazilian) Communist Party, Luis Carlos Prestes, said that foreign interests are trying to provoke a war between Brazil and Argentina. The Brazilians desire to live in peace with Argentina. He added that a break in relations with Argentina, which is ardently desired by some financier groups in Washington, may be the first step toward war."

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What is Russia's real policy in China? When Japan fell, the Chinese Communists appeared strong; Russia was giving them military assistance; and it looked as if Russia desired the downfall of Chiang Kai-shek and the establishment of a Communist régime. Later, as the Communists failed to show the expected military strength, Russia seemed prepared to desert them and come to terms with Chiang as the undisputed ruler of China.

But today, as negotiations between Communists and Chiang drag on, some observers have come to quite a different conclusion. They believe that Russia wants victory for neither side and regards a permanently divided and weak China as the best safeguard of Russian interests. Moscow's opposition to the unification of China under Chiang needs little explanation. Obviously the Russian rulers could not rest easy with a strong Nationalist China on their borders. It is also quite possible that Moscow would find disagreeable the prospect of a complete Communist victory in China.

In such an event, a Communist China, with 450 million people might appear as a rival to the Communist Motherland with its 190 million inhabitants. As the lodestar of Communism in Asia, the Chinese capital might well outshine Moscow, the traditional Communist Mecca. Nor is it certain that Moscow could then trust the Chinese Communist leaders; Mao Tse-tung might again, as he has several times in the past, show some independence of Moscow policies.

Considering this picture, it is not unlikely that Stalin prefers a weak and divided China, with neither side dominant. If that is so, then the durability of any "peace" reached by Yenan and Chungking will be highly uncertain.

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The State Department's "Big Stick" policy against Argentina, led by Assistant Secretary of State Spruille Braden, has received a serious check, Mr. Braden has been strongly supporting, if he did not inspire, the Uruguayan proposal for collective intervention in the western hemisphere which was obviously aimed at Argentina. By January 25, sufficient official replies to the Uruguayan proposal from Latin American republics had been received to show little support for, but, on the contrary, strong opposition to, the proposal. Up to that date, only five republics had signified full approval; while ten had registered their entire or partial opposition; and there had been no official report from six. Those supporting the proposal were: United States, Uruguay, Costa Rica, Guatemala and Nicaragua. The following opposed the proposal: Brazil, Venezuela, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico and Peru. Not heard from were Paraguay, Panama, Haiti, El Salvador, Dominican Republic -- and Argentina.

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This column has obtained the following penetrating observation from Congresswoman Claire Boothe Luce: "What is happening everywhere, at every level of thought, is that men are confusing the means with the end. UNO, or world cooperation, was intended to be a means towards peace, not an end in itself. So obsessed and hypnotized have Americans become (as a reaction from the isolation following World War I) with 'cooperating' that they are willing that peace and security should be sacrificed, if only we 'cooperate' with the Great Powers in doing so.

"The more I study America's role in the international situation, the more certain I am that what we do, we do not from stupidity but because we no longer know what our objectives are in cooperating. As someone said: 'Men always redouble their efforts when they lose sight of their objectives'."

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Notes and Quotes

Among recent books which have received much less publicity than is warranted by their enduring value is The Liberal Tradition, by William Aylott Orton, Professor of Economics at Smith College ($3.50, Yale University Press, 1945).

In this "Study of the Social and Spiritual Conditions of Freedom", Professor Orton inquires why the great philosophy of liberalism, on which the United States was founded, is today (page PM) "all but lost in a fog of careless words and empty phrases". The author is of English birth, a veteran of World War I, but has taught in this country for a quarter century. In the best vein of English political writing, fortified by a knowledge of American democracy as keen as that of de Tocqueville, Professor Orton combines the factual information of the economist with the spiritual insight of the philosopher. His study will explain, to all who worry about it, why current American thinking has become so shallow.

Time, issue of December 3, gave The Liberal Tradition the attention it deserves, relishing its analysis of self-styled liberals who are exploited by Communism without realizing that they have ceased to be liberals. But otherwise this very readable and significant volume has been sedulously played down, perhaps because its argument is unanswerable. [F. M.]

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A recent report from Germany, published by the American Association for a Democratic Germany (New York), gives the following picture of the attitude of the Germans toward their conquerors: "The British are now almost universally regarded as being 'the best'. At first, when the war ended, everybody wanted to be in the American zone and people in the British zone used to complain about their unfriendly attitude; meanwhile the picture has completely changed because the people have found out that the British are doing a better job in restoring transportation and business, allowing the Germans more freedom, in some parts more food despite their own shortage, their basically much more friendly treatment of the German population, their correct and inconspicuous behavior . . . the absence of the constant collective guilt propaganda which unnerves people so much in the American and French zone, and their much more energetic revival of cultural life.

"In Cologne, movies, shows, concerts, etc., are for both the British and the local population. In the cities in our zone, the overwhelming number of movies is requisitioned for U.S. purposes only. Things like the British soccer teams calling for the German teams in trucks, playing with them as equals, and then inviting them for tea afterwards enormously impress the population."

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Commenting on the ratification by the British Parliament of the British-American loan agreement, the London Economist says: "The decision is thus taken and there can be no going back on it. . . . The economic consequences depend entirely upon whether or not British exports can be expanded by the requisite amount -- to 175 per cent of the 1938 volume -- by the time the line of credit in America is exhausted. If they can, then all will be well. The country will be able to pay its way; there will be no difficulty in making the proceeds of British imports freely convertible into any currency in the world; the massive debts originating in the war can be slowly amortized; London, fully solvent, can recover its functions as a world banking center; and the fears now expressed by those who do not like the present agreements will look very foolish. . . . This is the hopeful picture from which those who like the agreement derive encouragement. It is not an impossible picture. But it will be immensely difficult to achieve."

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